

# Ireland to Fight for More Modesty in Women's Dress

By HUGH CURRAN

Dublin, Ireland, Feb., 1920.  
**"I** SHALL be very glad to back a movement started to put an end to the extravagant, unseemly and disedifying length to which ladies in this country have gone in adopting fashions of dress which are neither in keeping with female modesty or Christian reserve. It is lamentable to see the daughters of St. Patrick and St. Brigid exhibiting themselves in the dress, or rather undress, which modern fashions have introduced. Even the churches are not spared this scandal."

This is the weighty pronouncement which Cardinal Logue, the head of the Roman Catholic church, in Ireland, has addressed to Mrs. Maher, the founder of a new society which has just been started to combat the growing indecency of many of the fashions in ladies' costumes which are now to be seen in most cities of the world, Dublin and other Irish cities being no exception to the rule.

The other bishops of the Roman Catholic church in Ireland have endorsed the cardinal's denunciation, and now a society called the "League of St. Brigid" has been started to make war on modern fashions and to bring Irish women into line in defence of their traditional modesty.

The movement is not one that is likely to be confined to Ireland alone, but it is entirely fitting that its initiation should have taken place here. The purity of Irish life and the modesty of Irish women are historic and proverbial. They have been sung by the poets of our country in exquisite and immortal verse, and they have received time and again the tribute of distinguished visitors whose words carry weight and conviction.

Tom Moore and Gerald Griffin, to mention but two of our national poets, have immortalized the beauty and modesty of Irish women in lines which have world-wide popularity; and it is no exaggeration to say that they have done but simple justice to a noble theme. Where, outside of Ireland, can one find so delightful a sight, as say, in a remote part of rural Ireland when on a Sunday evening the boys and girls of the neighborhood assemble at the cross-roads for what is locally known as the "pattern" when they sing and dance to their hearts' content to the accompaniment of the fiddle or the old Irish bagpipes? There you see boisterous fun and gaiety without restraint—but immodesty never. Reels and jigs and hornpipes are danced as Goldsmith says "to tire each other down," while the old people and the children sitting around cheer and clap the nimble-footed exponents of the old Irish "steps," till the sun sinks in the west and all return to their homes. These innocent gaities, of course, have their critics. Dour Sabbatarians denounce them as a violation of the command to keep the Sabbath day holy. But who will say that such innocent merriment is not holy? Its effect on the morality of the people as a body is the best answer. Official statistics present an irrefragable proof.

**T**HERE is a movement of large proportions on in Ireland to induce women to be more modest in their dress and follow less what the Irish term as "Styles from ungodly France." This article tells of the movement.

Whatever else may be said of the Irish people as a whole there is no reflection on their personal purity or on the cleanliness of their domestic lives.

Mrs. Maher, of County Meath, who has undertaken the generalship of the campaign now started, is a remarkable lady. She is now in her seventy-fifth year. Active in various works connected with the Roman Catholic church, she wears a cross conferred on her by the late Pope Pius X as a mark of appreciation of her achievements. She is enthusiastic in the new propaganda and in her capacity of organizing secretary she is overwhelmed with correspondence from all parts of the world.

When I asked her for the story of the genesis of the campaign she said that it really followed upon a paper which she read at the congress of the Irish Catholic Truth Society, held in Dublin last summer. Many people wrote to her of the scandalous costumes which were to be seen at various public functions, especially in Dublin, and begged that something should be done. Cardinal Logue asked her to undertake the secretaryship, which at her age was a big undertaking, but she willingly did it in the hope that something really good would be the outcome.

Quoting Gerald Griffin's well-known lines on Christian modesty:

"Without thee life were all a waste,  
 Without thee vile were rank and power,  
 Without thee science sinks debased  
 And Beauty lies a soiled flower."

She pointed out that St. Brigid, who was a contemporary of St. Patrick in his work in Ireland, taught the Irish women of her time refinement of taste, gentleness of manner, and modesty of demeanor. Her teaching fell on fruitful soil and these

virtues were the characteristics of Irish women through all the succeeding centuries. Even in this twentieth century many still lived up to the highest standard, but she was sorry to say that many also had become slaves to the fashions imported into the country chiefly from godless France. When protests were made they were met with the flippant remark that "one might as well be out of the world as out of the fashion."

Further they were told that to say a word against the fashions meant injury to trade. This she denied absolutely, for the constant whirl of fashion, changing from month to month, was the greatest enemy of legitimate trade inasmuch as it left with the trader heaps of goods which had become obsolete before there was time to dispose of them. In addition there were heaps of unpaid bills, for the blind votaries of fashion would risk debt rather than the danger of being pronounced "not up to date."

In addition, said Mrs. Maher, all fashions, nowadays, came from France. There was a time when every country in Europe had its own style of fashion, but France, in order to find a world market for her exports of beautiful velvets, silks, brocades and other fabrics, conceived the idea of employing designers of great artistic taste to design the fashions and these were soon followed in other countries. When Christian kings and queens ruled in France no designs were allowed to offend against Christian refinement. Not so today.

Impious men could not have more able abettors than the designers who induced women to cast aside Christian modesty and adopt fashions that were often vulgar and invariably immodest.

So long as décolleté fashions were confined to evening dress for the ballroom, the theater and dinner parties they were tolerated because they did not come in front of the masses of the people, but when they were transferred to the streets, to the race courses and to public functions where the semi-nude women were exposed to the full gaze of the public, strong comments were made, and strong action became inevitable. The new campaign has already gained many recruits in Dublin and throughout Ireland, and it would seem that even now its effects are noticeable, especially when compared with the "loud" fashions which prevail in London and elsewhere. The Roman Catholic clergy have followed the lead of their bishops in condemning the modern fashions and in urging the wearing of more "discreet" costumes.

## More and More Farms Being Worked by Tenants

By F. B. NICHOLS

**T**HE MOST satisfactory farming plan can be based only on home owners. A system of permanent agriculture, taking the country generally, can be developed in no other way. These two axioms are fundamental in America, and must be considered with care by every man who has the welfare of food production at heart. And let it be said in passing that the welfare of the rural population is of vast interest to the people of the cities because it is only when agricultural conditions are on the most satisfactory basis that an ample supply of food will be available at reasonable prices for the cities.

Despite the importance of having the agriculture of the country based on home owners, the tendency has been to establish it more and more on tenants. This is true to an increasing extent in most of the leading agricultural sections. Many states in the Middle West have 50 per cent or more of tenants.

In the last year land prices have increased in many communities to an alarming point. Some land in Iowa and Illinois has sold for as much as \$600 an acre; a great deal of it for \$400 or more. Obviously a tenant will have difficulty in paying for a farm on any such basis.

In many cases these fictitious values have approximated a level which is beyond the reach of the average man.

The earth has not yet been monopolized, but ownership of some of the most fertile portions is approaching the phase of monopolistic ownership to a degree which should make us think seriously.

This condition partially explains why cash rent for good Iowa corn land has increased in a few years from \$5 to \$10 an acre; not because the land is inherently more valuable; not because it will grow more bushels of corn—but because its ownership is rapidly becoming more limited and because the owners can fix the price. And that's worth thinking about.

All of which brings up the obvious fact that all the land problems of this country require careful study. The percentage of home owners must be increased; and the speculative tendency in farm lands must be reduced. In speaking of this recently Frank G. Odell, of Kansas, who has made a careful study of this problem in the last six months, said:

"Let us try to answer the query, 'How shall we attempt to make agriculture permanently profitable?

By better farming?' Certainly. 'By using power machinery where profitable so to do?' Certainly. But first of all, by seeing to it that the capitalization of the farm—value of land, plus value of suitable permanent improvements, plus necessary implements and machinery for profitable operation, plus the proportion of livestock, et cetera, plus taxes, depreciation, living costs and the whole catalog of things which will put the farmer's family on a decent plane of existence—shall bear a somewhat definite relation to the economic return from the land.

"If the thought in mind can be conveyed successfully it will suggest that the cost of operation and net economic return from farming operations have an indispensable relation to capitalization; that increasing land values and increasing taxes are not things especially to be desired by the farmer who expects to stay on his farm and make a living from it, and that numerous things in our present scheme of ascertaining land values are sadly out of joint with the fixed laws of natural economics.

"It is easy to understand why the land speculator is complacent over rising prices. It is conceivable that the farmer who wishes to 'cash in' and retire to a life of useless ease in town may be satisfied with boom prices. But the young family that tackles the job of earning something like \$50,000 in a short lifetime, over and above the cost of rearing the children, to pay for a cornbelt farm, should have some rights worthy of consideration. Moreover, the great consuming public, to whose already bowed back all these rising costs must inevitably be passed on, has some rights also."

These rights include the important one of expecting that the prices paid for food will go into the hands of the farmers, and not to speculators.

Henry Allen, governor of Kansas, has been a leader in trying to work out a better system of ownership of the agricultural lands of America. In speaking of the need for more study along this line a few days ago, he said:

"Why not take up a whole-hearted study of the land problems of Kansas? Certainly they are large

enough to challenge the attention of every person who has the state's welfare at heart. Unless some very advanced legislation is passed the agriculture of the Middle West, including the Sunflower State, may soon be in a very unhappy condition. Nearly half the farms of this state are operated by tenants now, and the percentage is increasing rapidly—it is 55 per cent in Sumner County.

"It is commonly accepted as an axiom that the most satisfactory agriculture is one based on land owners. If that is true—and it should be obvious to every thinking person—it is plainly the duty of the state to concern itself with getting as high a proportion of land owners as possible. And we will never get anywhere merely by handing out good advice to the young men, with the added information that every young fellow can get a farm if he has enough 'get up' about him. That doubtless was true in the early days, when 160 acres could be obtained from Uncle Sam for the asking, but it quite obviously is not true today in the face of our rapidly increasing tenant rate. Why not try to work out a plan that will make it possible for a large number of the younger farmers of Kansas to own their homes?"

"I cannot see how a person can doubt the basic importance of increasing the proportion of home owners. Why not admit this? If one does, and attacks the problem of getting a larger number of owners, he immediately encounters the need for advanced legislation on land problems; in other words the system that has increased our proportion of tenants in Kansas from 16 per cent in 1880 to nearly 50 per cent today must be changed. Why not take up a consideration of this problem generally in Kansas at the institutes, granges, Farmers' Union meetings and in fact at every gathering of farmers?"

This problem can be considered with profit in the cities, too, for more home owners are needed there, also. And if speculation can be reduced, and farms and homes sell generally for what they are actually worth, the percentage of tenants will be reduced rapidly. Government aid in building and buying homes, a graduated land tax, the elimination of taxation from mortgages and many other things have been suggested. If a general study of the land problems is made by thinking men and women it is certain to result in much good.